

SCHIPPERS, HUIB & CATHERINE GRANT (eds). *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: An Ecological Perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press. xvii + 370 pp., figures, tables, index, companion website. ISBN 978-0-19-025908-2 (pbk).

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Sustainability has become a key concept in the humanities and social sciences as researchers have turned their attention toward the interrelationships between culture and ecology in global contexts. In the field of music there have been a number of new critical studies about these concepts, and yet few projects have made significant contributions to research methodologies in this area. What does it mean for music to be sustainable across global cultures, and how might this be explored and assessed? This edited volume of essays takes up those questions and related issues in a global and comparative study. It introduces new frameworks for understanding issues of sustainability in music, and it presents the findings from nine selected case studies. The book is the major output from a large international project called *Sustainable Futures for Music Cultures: Towards an Ecology of Musical Diversity* (2009–2014), funded by the Australian Research Council with international partners. The project consisted of nine research teams, each of which explored questions of sustainability in designated case examples. This book then is a result of that work, and it presents findings from the nine studies, along with an examination of the theoretical and methodological frameworks that guided the project. The book and the larger project from which it is derived represent major contributions to ethnomusicology and music studies more broadly, but its findings and research design will be of interest to researchers working in areas of cultural policy, heritage and preservation, and education, as well as in language and media. A useful companion website to the book is hosted by Oxford University Press, and it contains links to audio and video files, documents about the original project, and further study materials from the case examples.

The book opens with an insightful foreward by ethnomusicologist Anthony Seeger, who describes the project and positions it within its international research context. Seeger points out the special features of the project and the benefits of its comparative focus. The opening chapter that follows by Huib Schippers addresses the full project and provides an overview of the main themes of the book and its intersection with sustainability and ecology. Schippers places the project and its goals within a larger international attention to issues of sustainability that has driven recent international research and work from UNESCO, for example in areas of intangible heritage. Schippers is careful, however, to argue against former preservation approaches that cast music as an artifact, and instead he situates sustainability within the dynamics of cultural change. Of central importance to the project is the support and contributions of local stakeholders in each of the case studies, and in this way the work builds on the growing area of applied ethnomusicology that seeks to directly address



community concerns. Schippers provides an overview of the five domains that structured the methodology for each case study, as well as some of the research questions from the work (the full set of questions are located at the companion website). In chapter two of the book, Catherine Grant examines these five domains in detail: 1) systems of learning music, 2) musicians and communities, 3) contexts and constructs, 4) regulations and infrastructure, and 5) lastly media and the music industry.

The authors of the nine case study chapters that follow organize their material within these five domains, and under each theme they address “implications for sustainability”. This cohesive approach has many merits in facilitating comparisons across the geo-cultural areas studied, and although it makes the chapters somewhat predictable in format, many readers will find value in the comparative goals of the project. The individual case studies consist of: southern Ewe dance-drumming, Hindustani music, indigenous women’s songs of central Australia, Balinese gamelan, western opera, Amami *shima-uta* (island songs) in Japan, Korean *samulnori* (percussion quartet), mariachi music, and Vietnamese *ca trù* (a solo vocal genre with instrumental accompaniment). Each represents very different situations with regard to the state and future sustainability of musical practice. This is seen, for example, in that the project purposely examined broad genres of music that most readers would assume to be mostly sustainable in the near future (such as Western opera), but also genres under more immediate threat (such as indigenous song in central Australia). While some readers may question the need to explore the sustainability of practices such as western opera and Hindustani music – each of which maintains widespread international recognition through large global followings – the approach allows for the comparison of sustainability in music across the five domains. For example, the music industry and economics play large roles in opera, but clearly less so in Vietnamese *ca trù*. Issues of economics are linked as key for the future sustainability of both Ewe drumming and *ca trù*, while intergenerational transmission remains a pivotal issue for central Australian song. Issues of gender are examined particularly in the cases of mariachi music, Australian song, and *ca trù*. The case of Amami “island songs” will be of particular interest to readers of this journal given its intersection with questions of language. The final chapter of the book provides a comparison among the case studies, as well as a discussion of Schipper’s previously published “ecosystems of music” model. Schippers borrows from linguistic analysis to chart a means of assessing sustainability through notions of genre vitality, and he also discusses the potential usefulness of the project for local communities.

The project and the book will surely elicit further research into question about sustainability as well as the cultural practices discussed. Some readers may question some of the methodologies and assumptions that underpin the project. For example the book approaches music mostly through the lens of discrete genres or assemblages of genres (such as Balinese gamelan in chapter 6). This method facilitates the study of sustainability for that particular musical artifact, but of course genre is a fluid concept, and music exists equally as performance, in ways that are ephemeral, transitory, and in constant mutability through time as part of the creative process. This poses challenges for questions of sustainability that could be addressed in future work. Other

queries may stem from the criteria of comparison that can appear uneven when examining such broad categories as “Hindustani music” and “Western opera” against much more focused subjects such as a Amami *shima-uta* or Vietnamese *ca trù*. Schippers helpfully addresses some of the outstanding questions from the project in the last chapter, and which he aims at future research.

This project is a major contribution to ethnomusicology, as well as to critical research into areas of heritage, cultural preservation and documentation, and in global cultural practices. It offers much to consider for researchers and policy-makers, as well as for musicians and those involved with culture and arts. In addition to the scholarly study of sustainability, the book provides much evidence to pose challenging questions to cultural leaders and policy-makers about the future vitality of cultural practices within many international communities.

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